GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2685
ANSWERED ON:10.08.2005
SUBSIDY FACILITIES TO INDIANS VISITING RELIGIOUS SHRINES ABROAD
Manvendra Singh Shri

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the amount of subsidy and other facilities provided by the Union Government for the pilgrims visiting various religious Shrines at present, Shrine-wise;

(b) whether the Union Government proposes to provide such subsidy and other facilities to the Indian Citizens visiting various religious shrines in foreign countries;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

(a) Details of subsidy and other facilities provided by Union Government, at present, for pilgrims visiting various religious Shrines abroad are as follows:-

Kailash Mansarovar Yatra:

The Kailash Mansarovar Yatra is presently organized by the Government under a bilateral arrangement with the Chinese Government through the Lipulekh Pass in Pithoragrh, Uttaranchal. Government pays Rupees Rs. 3,250/- (Three Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty) for each pilgrim to Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam (KMVN) for arrangements made by KMVN for the Yatra. In addition, during the course of the Yatra, facilities provided by the Government to the pilgrims include free medical assistance, security and escort cover by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) till the Lipulekh Pass on the Indian side, communication links with China, and provision of satellite phone to the Liaison Officer for each batch of pilgrims for use during emergency throughout the Yatra. A Liaison Officer is attached by the Government with each batch of pilgrims, who is responsible for their general welfare. It is the Government`s endeavour to improve and upgrade facilities for the pilgrims going on the Yatra on a continuing basis.

During the last three years (2002, 2003 & 2004), 1322 pilgrims undertook Kailash Mansarovar Yatra, and an amount of approximately Rs. 43 Lakhs was paid to the Kumaon Mandal Vikas Nigam(KMVN) for making the required arrangements for the Yatra.

Religious Shrines in Pakistan:

No subsidy is given by the Government to the pilgrims visiting religious Shrines in Pakistan, including Gurdwara Shri Nankana Sahib (Pindi); Gurdwara Shri Panja Saheb, Hasanabdal (Pindi); Birth Place of Shri Guru Ram Das, Lahore; and Shrine at Sree Katasraj. The Ministry facilitates the obtaining of visas for the pilgrims visiting Pakistan under the bilateral `Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines - 1974`. Ministry of Railways arranges special trains for the pilgrims on cost basis as per procedures, as and when requested. Arrangements in Pakistan are made by the receiving organizations. Haj Pilgrims:

The amount of subsidy provided by the Government to Haj pilgrims who perform Haj through the Haj Committee of India during the last three years is:

2003 Rs. 172.00 crores (approx.)
2004 Rs. 160.70 crores (approx.)
2005 Rs. 179.66 crores (approx.)

The other facilities provided by the Government to the Haj pilgrims include setting up of hospitals and dispensaries in Saudi Arabia, supply of medicines, deputation of medical, para-medical and administrative staff. The Consulate General of India in Jeddah also renders assistance in making various logistical arrangements for the pilgrims performing Haj through the Haj Committee of India.

(b) No such proposal is presently under consideration of the Government.

(c) & (d) Does not arise.